



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



Cooperating with the Montana Department of Agriculture
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Winter Wheat Seedings 2008 Crop Year

Montana producers seeded 2.70 million acres of winter wheat last fall for the 2008 crop year, up 460,000 acres or 21 percent from the 2007 winter wheat planting of 2.24 million acres. This is the largest winter wheat crop for Montana since 1990 when 2.70 million acres were planted.

Winter wheat conditions in Montana at the end of December were lower than a year ago. Conditions were rated 2 percent very poor, 11 percent poor, 54 percent fair, 29 percent good, and 4 percent excellent compared with 1 percent very poor, 5 percent poor, 36 percent fair, 47 percent good, and 11 percent excellent a year ago. Protectiveness of snow cover at the end of December for the winter wheat crop is a concern as protectiveness was rated 88 percent very poor, 7 percent poor, 3 percent fair, 2 percent good, and 0 percent excellent. Wind damage was rated 6 percent moderate and heavy compared with 7 percent last year, while freeze and drought damage was 9 percent moderate and heavy compared with 5 percent last year.

U.S. winter wheat planted area for harvest in 2008 is estimated at 46.6 million acres, up 4 percent from 2007. Seeding began last August behind the 5-year average pace and remained behind until mid-November due to a lack of moisture in the Great Plains during much of the seeding period. Nearly all of the U.S. acreage was seeded by December 1 with the exception of some intended acres in the Southeast and California. Seeding was completed by the end of December in California. The winter wheat crop condition at the end of November was rated at 44 percent good to excellent compared with 53 percent the previous year.

Hard Red Winter (HRW) wheat seeded area is about 32.5 million acres, down 1 percent from 2007. Acreage was below last year's level in all States in the HRW growing area except North Dakota and Montana, where acreage increased 185,000 and 460,000, respectively. The dry fall limited planted acres in some parts of the region with planted area down 500,000 acres in Kansas and down 200,000 in both Oklahoma and Texas. Normal crop rotations also reduced seedings in some States in the region following the large winter wheat crop planted last year.

Soft Red Winter (SRW) area, at about 10.5 million acres, is up 21 percent from last year. Large acreage increases from last year occurred in all SRW growing States due largely to strong prices and ideal planting and germination conditions. Planted area increases of 200,000 acres or more are expected in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. Record high planted acreage is expected in Wisconsin, while North Carolina is expected to tie the record high set in 1985.

White Winter wheat seeded area totals nearly 3.65 million acres, up 7 percent from 2007. Crop conditions varied across the three Pacific Northwest States (Idaho, Oregon, and Washington) throughout the fall. Planted acreage in Washington and Oregon is up 30,000 acres each for 2008, with Idaho expecting an increase of 150,000 acres. Seeding began ahead of normal in all three States with some concerns about moisture supplies in Washington going into the winter months. By the first week of November, virtually all fields had been seeded in the region with 89 percent of the acreage emerged in Washington, 76 percent in Idaho, and 60 percent in Oregon.

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